



Hartford Foundation

FOR PUBLIC GIVING

Together for good.®

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving testimony in Support of

Senate Bill 298, An Act Establishing the Urban Homeownership Loan Fund

Senate Bill 302, An Act Concerning Housing Development in the State, Establishing a Housing Authority Resident Quality of Life Improvement Grant Program and a Housing Choice Voucher Task Force, and Requiring the Disclosure of Certain Natural Person Ownership Interests in Real Property

Senate Bill 299, An Act Establishing A Task Force Concerning The Use Of The State-administered General Assistance Program To Address Homelessness

Senate Bill 293, An Act Concerning a Study of Rent Stabilization

Senate Bill 300, An Act Concerning a Study of Excessive Rent Increases

Housing Committee

March 10, 2022

Good evening, Senator Lopes, Representative Williams, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. **The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bills 298, 302, 299, 293 and 300.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets, over the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$97 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$894 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latino residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to **increase the number of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods**. Higher opportunity neighborhoods are defined by a variety of factors, including low unemployment, better performing schools, lower crime and greater availability of quality, affordable housing stock.

The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. In order to support these outcomes, the Foundation invests in efforts designed to increase the stability, availability, and quality of affordable housing in the Greater Hartford region; align and leverage additional investment in Hartford neighborhoods and increase social strength and connectedness of Hartford neighborhoods. COVID has reinforced the need for all of us to live in safe, stable homes, in safe, stable neighborhoods, in safe, stable communities.

Deed restricted affordable housing has suppressed growth and development within many neighborhoods in Hartford, as well as other cities throughout the state. The high concentration of deed restricted affordable housing (which makes up almost half of all units in many Hartford neighborhoods) makes it exceedingly difficult for moderate or high income residents to find housing in the City, further concentrating poverty and limiting a diverse housing stock that would include affordable, market rate and homeownership opportunities. The market being largely focused on rentals, the concentration of affordable housing leading to depressed market-rate rents, and high taxes in the City, creates a situation where ownership is often financially unsustainable for owner-occupants and landlords. The subsequent disinvestment in properties, blight and vacancy creates a vicious downward cycle in many Hartford neighborhoods and neighborhoods across the State.



Hartford Foundation

FOR PUBLIC GIVING

Together for good.®

Efforts to support local developers are often challenging due to the cost of redeveloping older, blighted properties in a city like Hartford often exceeds the price at which the property could reasonably be sold to a potential homeowner. In response to this “appraisal gap,” the Hartford Foundation recently awarded a grant to the Hartford Land Bank to advocate for the creation a funding mechanism to support this type of development. After convening groups of local developers, community development corporations, advocates and financial institutions, the Hartford Land Bank drafted this proposal to support investment in urban communities that will make it possible to create generational wealth building in neighborhoods that have suffered from decades of disinvestment. **The Foundation encourages the committee to support Senate Bill 298, An Act Establishing the Urban Homeownership Loan Fund and other efforts focused on fostering neighborhood development and local property ownership in our urban communities.**

The Foundation also offers its support for Senate Bill 302, An Act Concerning Housing Development in the State, Establishing a Housing Authority Resident Quality of Life Improvement Grant Program and a Housing Choice Voucher Task Force, and Requiring the Disclosure of Certain Natural Person Ownership Interests in Real Property. The Foundation specifically supports the proposal to provide funds to housing authorities for the purpose of making improvements to any residential buildings managed by local authorities as recommended by resident advisory boards. We firmly believe that residents are best situated to identify areas of meaningful improvement to their homes and empowering them with the resources needed to make positive changes will improve their quality of life.

The Hartford Foundation has made and continues to make considerable investments in efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness in Greater Hartford. Each year, the Foundation awards approximately \$1 million to local nonprofit organizations to provide access to emergency shelter, housing subsidies, case management, eviction prevention and landlord negotiation, and other housing services to residents at-risk of becoming or experiencing homelessness. This includes support to the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network for rapid re-housing services during the winter.

Through its investments to prevent and reduce homelessness, the Foundation recognizes the many challenges low-income residents face in obtaining stable, quality, affordable housing. The Foundation offers it support for **Senate Bill 299, An Act Establishing A Task Force Concerning The Use Of The State-administered General Assistance Program To Address Homelessness.** It is vital that the state effectively utilize all available resources—including General Assistance—to provide support to residents most impacted by homelessness, including people of color, returning citizens, and LGBTQ adults and youth. The Foundation encourages legislative leaders to include representation from those most impacted by a lack of access to housing to serve as members of this task force.

According to Rent.com, Connecticut rental costs have been steadily rising over the past five years. This situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic where low vacancy rates, less new construction and supply chain issues combined to increase the cost to buy a home and create a surge in demand for rental properties. In addition, the economic challenges brought on by COVID and the need for a prolonged moratorium on evictions has also contributed to rental price increases as landlords seek to recover from significant losses of income. These developments have created substantial obstacles for low-income residents to find quality, affordable rental housing. For these reasons, the Hartford Foundation offers its support for **Senate Bill 293, An Act Concerning a Study of Rent Stabilization and Senate Bill 300, An Act Concerning a Study of Excessive Rent Increases.**

The Foundation looks forward to continuing its work with policymakers, nonprofits and residents to develop effective long-term policies to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods and have their voices heard by policymakers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@hfp.org or 860-548-1888.